

a) Amendments to the Claims

1-15. (*Canceled*)

16. (*Currently Amended*) A method of directly bonding two opposing silicon-containing surfaces, comprising the following steps in sequence:

polishing the opposing surfaces;

contacting the opposing surfaces with a detergent;

contacting the opposing surfaces with an aqueous rinse solution;

contacting the opposing surfaces with a solution of nitric acid;

contacting the opposing surfaces with a solution having a pH greater than 8 comprising ammonium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide or sodium hydroxide; ~~and~~

placing the opposing surfaces in contact with each other ~~while; and~~

heating the opposing surfaces to a temperature less than 300°C.

17. (*Canceled*)

18. (*Previously Presented*) The method of claim 16, further comprising a step of applying pressure of at least one pound per square inch during the step of placing the opposing surfaces in contact.

19-22. (*Canceled*)

23. (*New*) The method of claim 16, wherein in the step of polishing the opposing surfaces, the surfaces are polished to having a flatness less than 1 micron and a roughness less than 2.0 nm RMS.

24. (*New*) The method of claim 16, wherein after the step of contacting the opposing surfaces with a solution having a pH greater than 8 but before the step of placing the opposing surfaces in contact with each other, the opposing surfaces are rinsed with water, and the opposing surfaces are placed in contact without drying.

25. (*New*) The method of claim 16, wherein after the step of contacting the opposing surfaces with a solution having a pH greater than 8 but before the step of placing the opposing surfaces in contact with each other, the opposing surfaces are rinsed with water, and the opposing surfaces are dried before being placed in contact.

26. (*New*) The method of claim 25, wherein during the step of placing the opposing surfaces in contact with each other, a low vacuum pressure is applied to prevent air gap between the opposing surfaces.